

# ‘HOW TO DO THINGS WITH LETTERS’. PRESENCE AND ACTION BY LETTER IN PAUL AND IN THE DOCUMENTARY POPYRI

ROMEO POPA

**Abstract.** The relationship between Paul’s letters and ancient documentary letters is a valuable field of study in biblical exegesis that has been addressed in many ways since Deissmann’s pioneering work. The present study takes a closer look at the so-called ‘visit talks’, and traces a series of motifs and themes in both letters on papyrus and in the authentic Pauline letters. In doing so, it highlights not only the similarities but also Paul’s creative approach to some epistolary traditions in order to avoid a kind of ‘parallelomania’ with little exegetical benefit. Letters are not only intended to maintain a friendly relationship but also have distinct pragmatic features – they prescribe actions, make recommendations, requests, promises, etc. Letters are by no means ‘emergency solutions’ or a ‘deficient means of communication’ because of the physical distance between the letter writer and the addressee; instead, they play a key role in Paul’s missionary strategy.

**Keywords:** Paul’s letters, documentary letters, visit talks, apostolic *parousia*, pragmatic dimension of letters.

*For Prof. Hans Klein on his 85th birthday*

## 1. Preliminary considerations on some ongoing exegetical debates

The title of this study is inspired by the famous work of John L. Austin, the founder of the so-called ‘Speech Act Theory’ – *How to do things with words*.<sup>1</sup> Paul’s use of letters as a means of exercising apostolic authority in his intense interaction with various congregations makes such an association quite natural. My aim here is not to undertake an analysis of Paul’s assertions in light of the

<sup>1</sup> J.L. AUSTIN, *How to Do Things with Words. The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.



aforementioned theory<sup>2</sup> but rather to highlight pragmatic features of Paul's letters against the backdrop of some ancient epistolary themes and motifs from documentary letters on papyrus.<sup>3</sup> Paul's skill in using the appropriate rhetorical conventions in his letters enables him to explain and clarify vital aspects of his *kerygma*.

The study of Paul's intense activity as a letter-writer, as well as the form and content of his letters, constitutes a broad and complex exegetical task. Research to date has focused epistolary elements and their relationship to the epistolography of the time. In his pioneering work, A. Deissmann emphasized the similarity of the Pauline letters to private letters found among the Egyptian papyri. His sharp distinction between a "letter" and an "epistle" has been questioned repeatedly.<sup>4</sup> Today, intermediate levels between the letters of the uneducated and those who master the rules of ancient epistolary art are assumed.<sup>5</sup> Although not without

<sup>2</sup> On the usefulness of applying this theory to biblical studies, as well as a brief overview of the theory's development, cf. J.E. BOTHA, "The Potential of speech act theory for New Testament exegesis: Some basic concepts", *HTS* 47 (1991), 277–293, and J.E. BOTHA, "Speech act theory for New Testament exegesis", *HTS* 47 (1991), 294–303; not to forget the contributions in *Semeia* 41 (1988), dedicated to "Speech Act Theory and Biblical Criticism"; a short overview of the research history can be found in A.W. ZWIEP, "Bible Hermeneutics from 1950 to the Present: Trends and Developments", in: O. WISCHMEYER (ed.), *Handbuch der Bibelhermeneutiken, Von Origenes bis zur Gegenwart*, Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter 2016, 933–1008, esp. 974–976; with a focus on the letter of Paul, cf. J. BICKMANN, *Kommunikation gegen den Tod: Studien zur paulinischen Briefpragmatik am Beispiel des Ersten Thessalonicherbriefes* (FzB 86), Würzburg: Echter 1998, 46–47.

<sup>3</sup> Papyri are abbreviated according to the "Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets" available at <https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>; for *defixiones*, cf. <https://www.aiegl.org/grepiabbr.html>.

<sup>4</sup> A. DEISSMANN, *Bible Studies. Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity*, Authorized Translation by Alexander GRIEVE, Edinburgh: T&T Clark <sup>2</sup>1903, 1–59; IDEM, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*. New and completely revised edition with eighty-five illustrations from the latest German edition, translated by L.R.M. STRACHAN, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927, 227–230.

<sup>5</sup> For a critical assessment of supporters of this classification, cf. L. DOERING, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography* (WUNT 298), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012, 22–23, n. 97. See an overview of the debate in W.G. DOTY, *Letters in Primitive Christianity*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press 1973, 24–27; S.K. STOWERS, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (LEC), Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press 1986, 17–20; E.R. RICHARDS, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing. Secretaries, Composition and Collection*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2004, 122–140; and T.J. BAUER, *Paulus und die kaiserzeitliche Epistolographie. Kontextualisierung und Analyse der Briefe an Philemon und an die Galater* (WUNT 276), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011, 1–8.

controversy, Deissmann opened up a field of research in which further questioning and clarification are still necessary.

The quest for the ancient epistolary context of the Pauline letters remains a valuable area of New Testament research. Although some think that “letter writing conventions touched only the outer borders of the New Testament epistles”,<sup>6</sup> the Pauline epistles contain more themes, motifs, and conventions common to ancient documentary letters than generally assumed.<sup>7</sup> To determine what constitutes a convincing parallel is a challenge because of Paul’s peculiarities and frequent divergences from the known epistolary conventions. Ignoring these distinctive features of the Pauline letters can easily lead to a form of “parallelomania” that brings little exegetical benefit.<sup>8</sup>

An important debate in recent decades regarding the function and effectiveness of letters was initiated by R.W. Funk, who characterized the modalities of apostolic presence in Pauline communities as “apostolic *parousia*”.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, the letter, the sending of messengers, and the personal visit represent

<sup>6</sup> L. THURÉN, “Epistolography and Rhetoric. Case not Closed”, in: S.E. PORTER and B.R. DYER (ed.), *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric. Theory and Practice in the Hellenistic Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2016, 141–159, 144.

<sup>7</sup> With respect to the formal elements of the letters, see the analysis of O. ROLLER, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe. Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom antiken Briefe* (BWANT 58), Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1933, 26: „Die rein formale Seite wird fast ganz oder doch sehr stark außer Acht gelassen“. On the comparative value of documentary letters, cf. J.L. WHITE, *Light from Ancient Letters*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986, 19–20, with the observation on p. 20: “[E]ven a creative letter writer like Paul had to express himself by means of recognizable conventions”. Essential for the determination of the epistolary character are the formulas; cf. T.Y. MULLINS, “Formulas in New Testament Epistles”, *JBL* 91 (1972), 380–390; formulas in letters on papyrus have been recently systematically analyzed by D. NACHTERGAELE, *The Formulaic Language of the Greek Private Papyrus Letters* (Trismegistos Online Publications. Special Series 6), Leuven, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> On the debate about parallels to the New Testament terms and texts and the necessity to examine them in their contexts, cf. L.M. WHITE and J.T. FITZGERALD, “Quod Est Comparandum: The Problem of Parallels”, in: J.T. FITZGERALD, T.H. OLBRICHT and L.M. WHITE (ed.), *Early Christianity and Classical Culture. Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, Leiden/Boston: Brill 2003, 13–39.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. R.W. FUNK, “The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance”, in: W.R. FARMER, C.F.D. MOULE and R.R. NIEBUHR (ed.), *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, 249–268; see also F. SCHNIDER and W. STENGER, *Studien zum neutestamentlichen Briefformular* (NTTS 11), Leiden: Brill 1987, 92–103; J.L. WHITE, *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-Body in the Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle* (SBLDS 2), Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature 1972, 62–63, 71, 99–111; WHITE, *Light*, 218–220; J.L. WHITE, “Saint Paul and the Apostolic Letter Tradition”, *CBQ* 45 (1983), 433–444, here 439–440; M.L. STIREWALT, *Studies in Ancient Greek Epistolography* (RBS 27), Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1993, 4–5; DOTY, *Letters*, 36–37. T.Y. MULLINS, “Visit Talk in New Testament Letters”, *CBQ* 35 (1973), 350–358, brings illustrative examples from the documentary letters of various items addressed by Funk.

three ways in which Paul exerts his apostolic presence. According to Funk, “the letter is at best written authority for what the emissary has to say. Since Paul gives precedence to the oral word, the written word will not function as a primary medium of his apostleship”.<sup>10</sup> This view has not gone unchallenged. Above all, the rigid hierarchy introduced “in ascending order of significance” different modes of communication:<sup>11</sup> the letter, the dispatch of an emissary, and Paul’s own presence. The subordinate role of the letters<sup>12</sup> and of envoys<sup>13</sup> is called into question. Other critics raise questions about the structural elements or the number of various motifs.<sup>14</sup>

This study will offer more context to this debate by introducing evidence from documentary papyri on different aspects of the topic. In a first step, the issue of announcing visits in documentary letters<sup>15</sup> is addressed with emphasis on some common epistolary conventions, themes, and motifs. An overview of the modalities of Paul’s interaction with his congregations will be followed by a section that focuses on letters as a medium of active presence and as an agent of change.

## 2. ‘Visit talks’ in letters on papyrus: Some related epistolary themes and motifs

A letter emerges as an indispensable means of communication only when the basic condition for direct communication is not given – namely, being together. The visit, whether firmly planned or only imagined, will remove this barrier and reunite the writing partners. This dialectic relationship between ‘being absent’ (ἀπών) and ‘being present’ (παρών) is a conventional epistolary *topos* in ancient

<sup>10</sup> FUNK, “Apostolic Parousia”, 260; see also SCHNIDER and STENGER, *Studien*, 98 („Defizienz des geschriebenen Wortes“).

<sup>11</sup> FUNK, “Apostolic Parousia”, 258.

<sup>12</sup> BICKMANN, *Kommunikation*, 231, n. 60: „Der Brief wird in der vorliegenden Arbeit besser bewertet – als παρουσία des Paulus“.

<sup>13</sup> M.M. MITCHELL, “New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Conventions: The Example of Timothy and Titus”, *JBL* 111 (1992), 641–662, here 641–643, challenges this fix hierarchy and upgrades the role and effectiveness of letters and especially of envoys: “these envoys were consciously sent by Paul to play a complex and crucial intermediary role that he could not play, even if present himself” (662); see also H.-J. KLAUCK, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament. A Guide of Context and Exegesis*, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press 2006, 65.

<sup>14</sup> Criticism of Funk’s model also comes from D.E. AUNE, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (LEC), Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press 1987, 190: “[T]he absence of a consistent structure suggests that we are dealing with a *topos* or theme with a number of subordinate motifs”; C. GERBER, *Paulus und seine ‚Kinder‘. Studien zur Beziehungsmetaphorik der paulinischen Briefe* (BZNW 136), Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 2005, 67, distinguishes three *topoi*: „Quasi-Anwesenheit“, „Sehnsucht“ and „Reisepläne“.

<sup>15</sup> MULLINS, “Visit Talk” substitutes the term “visit talks” for “parousia” as a common letter theme in non-literary papyri.

letters.<sup>16</sup> The very common verb *πάρεμι* (“to be present”)<sup>17</sup> is often used to express the desire of making a visit as soon as possible.<sup>18</sup> It is the spatial distance, the physical absence that makes a letter necessary: „Es wird nämlich als die wichtigste Aufgabe des Briefes angesehen, eine Form eben dieses Zusammenlebens während einer Zeit räumlicher Trennung darzustellen, d.h. die *ἀπουσία* zur *παρουσία* machen“.<sup>19</sup>

The letter writers show in numerous private letters that they are concerned and worried about the situation of the addressees. The senders often give free expression to their emotions and write about their grief caused by the spatial separation from their dearest ones.<sup>20</sup> The writer’s longing for, and missing, the addressees are attributed to the special *πόθος* (“yearning, regret”) motif.<sup>21</sup> As part of a well-known epistolary motif, this expression of longing should be distinguished from the emotions that are occasionally displayed in private letters.<sup>22</sup> The existence of epistolary conventions does not make letters less emotional; these must be understood as culturally encoded expressions of real emotional states.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> H. KOSKENNIEMI, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n.Chr.* (Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia B/102,2), Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia 1956, 172–180 provides the most important contribution to the topic of “presence” in the letters on papyrus with plenty of documentary evidence; see also M. TRAPP (ed.), *Greek and Latin Letters: An Anthology, with Translation* (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, 39; K. THRAEDE, *Grundzüge griechisch-römischer Briefftopik* (Zetemata 48), München: Beck 1970, 39–47, 79–81; 95–106; 146–157; G. KARLSSON, „Formelhaftes in Paulusbrieffen?“, *Eranos* 54 (1956), 138–141, here 140–141; B. BOSENIUS, *Die Abwesenheit des Apostels als theologisches Programm. Der zweite Korintherbrief als Beispiel für die Brieflichkeit der paulinischen Theologie* (TANZ 11), Tübingen/Basel: Francke Verlag 1994, 110–113.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. F. PREISIGKE, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden, mit Einschluß der griechischen Inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienschilder usw. aus Ägypten*, vol. 2: Λ–Ω, Berlin 1927, s.v. *πάρεμι*; J.H. MOULTON and G. MILLIGAN, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources*, London: Hodder and Stoughton 1929, s.v. *πάρεμι*.

<sup>18</sup> See for example the use of *πάρεμι* in visit plans in ll. 17–18 of UPZ 1.71 (20 Sep 152 BCE) or ll. 13–15 of SB 3.6300 (28 Mar 88 BCE); etc.

<sup>19</sup> KOSKENNIEMI, *Studien*, 38.

<sup>20</sup> This subject is addressed by W. CLARYSSE, “Emotions in Greek Private Papyrus Letters”, *Ancient History* 47 (2017), 63–86, here 66–68; see also STOWERS, *Letter Writing*, 71.

<sup>21</sup> See on this motif esp. K. THRAEDE, *Grundzüge*, 165–168, and KOSKENNIEMI, *Studien*, 169–172.

<sup>22</sup> This is not the case in P. ARZT-GRABNER, *Letters and Letter Writing* (Papyri and the New Testament 2), Paderborn: Brill Schöningh 2023, 19–25, where this letter *topos* and the various emotional expressions that happen to appear in letters are lumped together. Moreover, the *πόθος*-motif is unfortunately not addressed at any length either here or elsewhere in the volume. For a critical evaluation of this project by a professional papyrologist, cf. the review of Lajos BERKES in *NovT* 67 (2025), 409–418.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. C. KOTSIFOU, “Emotions and Papyri: Insights into the Theatre of Human Experience in Antiquity”, in: A. CHANIOTIS (ed.), *Unveiling Emotions: Sources and Methods for the Study of Emotions in the Greek World*, (Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien 52),

In *P.Mich.* 3.203 (114–116 CE), which will be treated more extensively later, the soldier’s desire to visit his mother was very strong and had noticeable emotional overtones, especially in ll. 17–19, where he uses the verb θέλω. A certain Serenus longs in *P.Oxy.* 3.528 (II CE) for his sister, and probably also wife, Isidora, writing in ll. 7–9: ἀφ’ ὧς ἐκξήλθεις (read ἐξήλθεις) ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ | πένθος ἡγούμην νυκτὸς κλέων (read κλαίων) | ἡμέρας δὲ πενθῶ (read πενθῶ<ν>) (“since you left me I have been living in sorrow, weeping by night and lamenting by day”).<sup>24</sup> Acknowledging the consequences of the spatial distance to the addressee, a certain Ammonas writes in *P.Brem.* 58 (113–120 CE) to his brother Chairemon: “since you departed from us, we are grieving” (ll. 6–7: ἀφ’ οὗ ἐξήλθεις ἀφ’ ἡμῶν, | λουπου[με]ν [read λυπούμεθα]). A son shows concern for the safety of his father Apollo in *P.Oxy.* 14.1680 (late III–early IV CE): “then I told you earlier how worried I was about your absence among us, and that something might happen to you (ll. 6–8: γὰρ πρὸ τούτου σοι ἐδήλωσα λυπούμενος ἐπὶ τῇ ἐν ἡμῖν σου ἀπουσίᾳ, | μήπως ὁ μὴ εἶοι [read εἶη] σοι γένοιτο).<sup>25</sup> Finally, we find in the letter of a certain Flavius Herculanus to a woman called Apollonarian (*P.Oxy.* 14.1676 [after 324 CE]) a similar formulation in ll. 20–21: λυποῦμαι πάλιν ὅτι | ἐκτός μου εἶ[ι] (“yet I am grieved that you are away from me”).

Sadness and worry over the absence of a dear person or over the lack of news<sup>26</sup> are closely related to the other themes, such as the desire to be present or the mediating role of a letter. When the senders of the letters long for someone, they implicitly desire their presence. The request for a letter that would ease such pain is a component of the same pattern, as the implicit wish to visit the addressee. The senders are willing to make efforts and take the necessary steps to meet the addressees in person. As Paul does at many places in his letters (see the next paragraph), documentary letters often contain details of intended or planned visits.<sup>27</sup> Such “visit talks” prepare the moment when addressee and sender are together again.

Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2012, 39–90, here 61; see also C.M. KREINECKER, “Emotions in Documentary Papyri: Joy and Sorrow in Everyday Life”, in: R. EGGER-WENZEL and J. CORLEY (ed.), *Emotions from Ben-Sirah to Paul* (DCL.Y), Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012, 451–271, here 454.

<sup>24</sup> On the circumstances in this papyrus see R. SCHOLL and M. HOMANN, „Antike Briefkultur unter Familienmitgliedern“, in: J. HERZER (ed.), *Papyrologie und Exegese. Die Auslegung des Neuen Testaments im Lichte der Papyri* (WUNT II/341), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012, 47–126, here 105–106.

<sup>25</sup> See also *P.Oxy.* 1.123.8–9 (III–IV CE).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *P.Mich.* 8.466.5 (26 Mar 107 CE); *BGU* 3.845.8–10 (II CE); see on this KOSKENNIEMI, *Studien*, 73–75.

<sup>27</sup> As MULLINS, “Visit Talk”, 354, points out: “[V]isit talk was a common epistolary theme in the early centuries. Lots of people wrote about their projected visits”; see also TRAPP (ed.), *Greek and Latin Letters*, 39; with examples WHITE, *Form*, 49–51. As DOTY, *Letters*, 36 puts it: “[I]n these

In the private letter *UPZ* 1.71 (20 Sep 152 BCE), a certain Apollonios wants to persuade a man named Ptolemaios to be a witness in a dispute with Ptolemaios’s younger brother, hoping that as a family member he will find the right tone. For the settlement of this dispute, Apollonios himself promises: “and I will also be immediately present with you as soon as I have the opportunity” (ll. 17–18: καὶ αὐτὸς δέ | ὡς ἂν εὐκαιρήσω, παραχρῆμα παρέσομαι πρὸς σέ). *SB* 3.6300 (28 Mar 88 BCE) belongs to a series of letters written in connection with a revolt in Egypt. This one is written by a certain Platon, probably the *epistrategos* of the Thebaid, and is addressed not to a single person but to all the inhabitants of Pathyris. They are urged to stand firm and support their appointed military commander. In ll. 13–15 they are also informed of the imminent visit of the sender himself: μέχρι τοῦ [καὶ ἡμᾶ]ς ὅτι | τάχο[ς] παρῆναι τοῖς | τόπο[ις] (“until I myself as quickly as possible will also be present in your district”). A certain Apollonios fulfills in Lykopolis orders of the *strategos* Apollonios; in his letter *P.Brem.* 20 (116–120? CE) he apologizes first that he could not come because of urgent business (ll. 11–14), but is confident that (“after a few days, if the gods keep me safe, I will be with you” (ll. 14–15: μεθ’ ἡμέρας δὲ ὀλίγας, ἐὰ[ν οἱ] | θεοὶ σώζωσι, παρέσομαι πρὸς σέ).

The subject of an upcoming visit, as soon as circumstances will permit, is discussed in detail in *P.Mich.* 3.203 (114–116 CE).<sup>28</sup> Saturnilos is a soldier stationed in a garrison of Pselkis, and he repeatedly informs his mother of his plans to visit; first in ll. 7–8 with *BL* 3:111: ἐὰν εὔρω εὐκαιρείαν ἐργασείαν διδώ[ν]αι ἔρχομαι μετ’ ἐπιστολῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς (“if I find an opportunity to take pains, I am coming to you with letters”). To dispel any doubts about his plans to visit his mother, he assures her that all those who come home will testify to his determination: “how I seek daily to come” (l. 17: πῶς καθ’ ἡμέρα [read ἡμέρα<v>] ζητῶ [τ]οῦ ἐλθεῖν). The strong desire to see his mother again and the eagerly planned visit go hand in hand in ll. 17–19: εἰ[ὶ] ὑμεῖς θέλετέ μοι (read με) | [μ]ικρὸν εἶδεῖν, ἐγὼ μέγα, καὶ εὔχομαι καθ’ ἡμέρα (read ἡμέρα<v>) τοῖς θεοῖς πῶς | [δῶσ] `ου` [σι] .τα[χ]ὴν τὴν εὐοδίαν τοῦ ἐλθεῖν (“if you want to see me a little, I [want to see you] very much, and I pray daily to the gods that they will soon grant [me] a favorable occasion to come”).

segments of his letters, we sense Paul’s understanding of the epistolary situation as generally understood in the Graeco-Roman world”. S.E. PORTER, “A Functional Letter Perspective: Towards a Grammar of Epistolary Form”, in: S.E. PORTER and S.A. ADAMS (ed.), *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (Pauline Studies 6), Leiden/Boston: Brill 2010, 9–31, here 16, counts the “travelogue (‘I am eager to visit’)” among the epistolary formulas.

<sup>28</sup> Further evidence of planned visits can be found in: *P.Mich.* 8.485.16–17 (105? CE); 8.481.14–15; 8.479.15–17 (both early II CE); *P.Oxy.* 3.531.6–9 with *BL* 4:59 (II CE); *BGU* 2.380.17–19 (III CE); *P.Flor.* 2.127.1–2 with *BL* 1:149 (17 Jan 266 CE); *PSI* 4.299.17–19 (end III CE); *P.Lips.* 1.110.16–20 (ca. III–IV CE); etc.

Another element that is related to announced visits in the documentary letters deserves some attention, namely the involvement of higher powers in the planning and carrying out of journeys and visit plans. This mirrors a widespread mentality in antiquity; the ancients “both sought and felt the presence of the gods while they travelled”.<sup>29</sup> These can have a beneficial or an adverse effect. The will of the gods, as already seen in *P.Mich.* 3.203.18–19 or *P.Brem.* 20.14–15 (116–120? CE), is often a component of the ‘visit talks’.<sup>30</sup> In this respect, the letter *P.Oxy.* 14.1666 (III CE) of a certain Pausanias to a Herakleides brings different elements of this topic together – visit wish and plan, report about a hindrance, and the help of the gods (cf. ll. 11–12; 12–15; 15–17).

The obstacles that have prevented the letter writer from coming in person can be various: <sup>31</sup> “urgent business” as above in *P.Brem.* 20.11–14; unspecified “rude treatment” (l. 7: δὴ τὸ ἐπηρεᾶσθαι) as in *P.Fay.* 123 (ca. 100? CE). A certain Herakleides was unable to visit Helen because of a “state of weakness” (ll. 2–3: ἐνω|θρευσάμην), cf. *P.Freib.* 4.56 with *BL* 9:90 (I–II CE). Finally, supernatural reasons are stated in the probable “literary letter”<sup>32</sup> *SB* 24.16268 (II CE) – “neither the gods nor destiny had pity on us” (ll. 5–6: οὔτε θεοὶ ἡμᾶς ἡλῆη|[σαν οὔθ’ ἡ εἰμ|αρμένη) – to explain the absence of the letter sender.

### 3. People and letters on the way: Paul’s communication with his communities

This paragraph mirrors to some extent the previous one. We will provide a brief overview of the passages in the authentic Pauline letters that belong to the same thematic constellation and also resonate with the documentary letters mentioned above. Since Paul was often traveling for long periods of time and, despite all his efforts, he was rarely able to visit his congregations in person, either his co-workers or his letters served to maintain contact, especially in critical times. His itinerary and the ‘visit talks’ in the letters were informed by some hard realities, including the configuration of the transportation network, the need for

<sup>29</sup> S. MUIR, “Religion on the Road in Ancient Greece and Rome”, in: P.A. HARLAND (ed.), *Travel and Religion in Antiquity* (SCJud 21), Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2011, 29–47, here 45.

<sup>30</sup> The assistance of gods when planning a travel is mentioned also in ll. 13–14 of *BGU* 1.249 (ca. 75–85 CE); ll. 18–19 of *P.Mich.* 8.492 (II CE); ll. 16–18 of *P.Mich.* 8.486 (II CE); ll. 7–8 of *P.Oxy.* 3.531 with *BL* 4:59 (II CE); ll. 14–15 of *P.Mich.* 8.493 (II CE), ll. 23–24 of *P.Mich.* 8.503 (late II CE); ll. 11–12 of *PSI* 4.299 (end III CE).

<sup>31</sup> See also *P.Mich.* 15.751.26–30 (late II CE); *P.Lond.* 7.1979.17–19 (before 2 Jan 252 CE); *P.Oxy.* 14.1773.8–10 (III CE); *P.Oxy.* 61.4126.11–16 (III–IV CE); etc.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Pieter J. SJPSTEIJN, “Three private letters”, *ZPE* 113 (1996), 163–167, 165.

subsistence, and local opposition.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, personal visits or various emissaries from Paul or from the congregations who convey messages in one direction or the other are mentioned repeatedly. The letters often capture such moments of a lively communication and also provide insight into the personal views and assessments of the situation by the letter’s sender. Because the expressions in the various passages are often quite similar, it would be useful to systematize such notices about visit plans from the Pauline letters.<sup>34</sup>

A personal meeting, either the founding visit or another subsequent visit, is sometimes explicitly mentioned and represents the starting point for communicative developments and upheavals over time. In 1 Thess 1:5 (οἷοι ἐγενήθημεν ἐν ὑμῖν), explicit reference is made to the first encounter and to the extraordinary reception that Paul enjoyed in Thessaloniki (cf. v. 9); consequently, 1 Thess 2:1–12 goes into more detail about the apostle’s special commitment during his first stay, while the Thessalonians are expressly reminded of this time (2:9 μνημονεύετε).<sup>35</sup> A previous visit is also referred to in 1 Cor 1:14, then more extensively, beginning with 2:1 (ἐλθὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς), and also in passing in 2 Cor 11:9 (παρὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς). Galatians 1:6 clearly expresses Paul’s bitterness because of how quickly—and astonishingly—the addressees had turned away from what he had proclaimed to them during the first visit (cf. Gal 1:6); from 4:13 onwards, the memory of the harmony from the time when Paul was present among the Galatians (4:18: ἐν τῷ παρεῖναι με πρὸς ὑμᾶς) is addressed but not without a certain reproachful tone. Previous encounters are often simply implied, because all communication by letter has its origin and motivation in past face-to-face interactions (with the exception of Rome – the only letter Paul wrote to a congregation he has not yet met).

Closely linked to his personal familiarity with the addressees is the dialectic παρῶν and ἀπῶν in the community, often referred to by Paul, as already noted for the letters on papyrus. Depending on the situation, the variations make it clear that

<sup>33</sup> On this neglected aspect of the Pauline traveling activity, cf. R.S. SCHELLENBERG, “‘Danger in the wilderness, danger at sea’: Paul and the Perils of Travel”, in: P.A. HARLAND (ed.), *Travel and Religion in Antiquity* (SCJud 21), Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2011, 141–161, here 142: “[I]n Paul’s writings reference to travel functions as an indicator of hardship, uncertainty, and precariousness”; T.L. DONALDSON, “‘The Field God Has Assigned’ Geography and Mission in Paul”, in: L.E. VAAGE (ed.), *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity* (SCJud 18), Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2006, 109–137, esp. 132–134. As a concrete example from daily life, in the private letter *P.Oxy.* 1.118 (late III CE), the letter senders Saras and Eudaimon have been advised, “on account of the uncertainty of the road” (ll. 5–6: διὰ τὸ ἄδηλον τῆς ὁδοπορίας), to arrange for a ferry-boat.

<sup>34</sup> The place of the so-called “travelogue” can vary greatly in the Pauline letters, cf. S.E. PORTER, *The Apostle Paul. His Life, Thought, and Letters*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2016, 148–149.

<sup>35</sup> See also J.M.F. HEATH, “Absent Presence of Paul and Christ: *Enargeia* in 1 Thessalonians 1–3”, *JSNT* 32 (2009), 3–38, here 7–8.

Paul deliberately uses a *topos* that is common in the documentary letters.<sup>36</sup> Paul's use of the verb *παρεῖμι* ("to be present")<sup>37</sup> points to the core of a human need for closeness and direct communication. In his letters, we find several times the derived substantive *παρουσία* as well: once in reference to the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17), twice in reference to Titus (2 Cor 7:6–7), and three times in reference to Paul himself (2 Cor 10:10; Phil 1:26, 12).<sup>38</sup> In Phlm 17, Onesimus is recommended as Paul's *παρουσία*, telling Philemon: προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ.

As a state of temporal orphanhood – a particularly affectionate paraphrase for *ἀπόντες*<sup>39</sup> – this separation is expressed in 1 Thess 2,17, but with a clear indication that this was only external, in appearance (*προσώπῳ*) and not in the heart (*καρδίᾳ*). This differentiation implies that, in Paul's view, any form of separation can be overcome.<sup>40</sup> The same image is expressed differently in 1 Cor 5:3, where the bodily (*τῷ σώματι*) absence appears to be transcended by spiritual (*τῷ πνεύματι*) presence.<sup>41</sup> This element plays an important role in the argumentation of the Second Corinthians, where it is entangled with the severity that Paul could potentially show in the face of the disturbances in the community (2 Cor 10:2); or when he is confronted with the accusation that although his letters (*αἱ ἐπιστολαί*) have a powerful effect, his personal appearance (*ἡ παρουσία*) seems weak and contemptible (10:10). This is accompanied by the subtle threat that his absence through letters (10:11: *δι' ἐπιστολῶν ἀπόντες*) will be followed by strong punitive actions at his return in person (cf. 2 Cor 13:2, 10). Due to the situation, the usual

<sup>36</sup> This dependence on an epistolary tradition has already been addressed in research, cf. B. BOSENIUS, *Abwesenheit*, 113 („Varianten eines weit verbreiteten Briefmotives und nicht etwa [...] Ad-hoc-Bildungen des Paulus“); see also THRAEDE, *Grundzüge*, 95–96.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 5:3; 2 Cor 10:2, 11; 11:9; 13:2, 10; Gal 4:18, 20.

<sup>38</sup> For the analysis of the 'apostolic *parousia*' passages in the Corinthian correspondence, with a critical evaluation of the approach of Funk, cf. L.A. JOHNSON, "Paul's Epistolary Presence in Corinth: A New Look at Robert W. Funk's Apostolic 'Parousia'", *CBQ* 68 (2006), 481–501. The thematic papyrological commentaries on the New Testament seem not to be aware of this important scholarly debate implying letters on papyrus and, as a result, they do not make any contribution to it at all. Of the many possibilities available (cf. 1 Cor 15:23; 2 Cor 7:6; 10:2; etc.), only R.E. KRITZER in P. ARZT-GRABNER, R.E. KRITZER, et al., *1. Korinther* (PKNT 2), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2006, 202–203 briefly refers with respect to 1 Cor 5:3 to the work of Koskeniemi, without addressing this broad topic accordingly.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. THRAEDE, *Grundzüge*, 95.

<sup>40</sup> See the remarks of BICKMANN, *Kommunikation*, 227: „Durch die briefkonventionelle Semantik der Texte ist die Idee impliziert, dass die Aufhebung des Disäquilibriums nicht unbedingt durch das Wiedersehen geschehen muss“; Paul chooses a very personal expression, which nevertheless stems from a well-established epistolary tradition (cf. THRAEDE, *Grundzüge*, 96).

<sup>41</sup> At this place, *πνεῦμα* is to be understood as part of a letter-specific motif, without theological implications (THRAEDE, *Grundzüge*, 98–99).

idea that the painfully separated letter writer longs for the presence of his loved ones is overturned, and the letter becomes an instrument for regulating the situation from the distance, so that no harshness should be more necessary upon arrival. The letter is therefore intended to bring the Corinthians to their senses in advance and guide them toward behavior that will render the apostle's presence unnecessary. This seems to be the underlying idea in Phil 1:27 and 2:12 as well (see also Gal 4:18), this time against the backdrop of a close relationship with his addressees: the practice of faith in obedience should always prevail, whether Paul is present or, even more so, in his absence (Phil 2:12: ἐν τῇ ἀπουσίᾳ μου).

The wish to be personally present in communities is similar to the wish of many letter writers who have complained in their letters on papyrus about the spatial separation or the absence of news from their families or friends. We are dealing here with a large epistolary theme, sometimes mixed with an explicit intention to visit the addressees as soon as possible. This physical separation has an emotional component (the so-called πόθος-motive, see above) that recurs repeatedly in Paul's letters often with similar formulations as in the documentary letters. Already in his first letter, Paul lets the Thessalonians know several times explicitly how fervently he longs to see them<sup>42</sup> (1 Thess 2:17: ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ; 2:18: ἠθελήσαμεν)<sup>43</sup> – a mutual desire as we read in 1 Thess 3:6 (ἐπιποθοῦντες; see also 3:10). He writes again to the Corinthians that he wants (1 Cor 16:7: θέλω) to see them not just in passing but for a longer period of time. Despite the disputes and ethical disorders of which Paul was meanwhile informed, he wishes to visit the Corinthians anyway (2 Cor 12:20: θέλω). This also applies to Galatians, where Paul would have eagerly wished to be present (Gal 4:20: ἤθελον δὲ παρεῖναι) in order to ease the tensions with his presence. The imperfect indicative ἤθελον here is likely to replace a potential optative<sup>44</sup> and accordingly is best translated as "I would like to".<sup>45</sup> Paul here takes up the same πόθος motif.<sup>46</sup> From the letter to the Philippians, we learn that Paul considered it necessary to send Epaphroditus back although he was seriously ill precisely because he longed for them (Phil 2:26: ἐπιποθῶν). Even to the Romans, whom he did not know personally, Paul expresses

<sup>42</sup> BICKMANN, *Kommunikation*, 235–236; THRAEDE, *Grundzüge*, 97.

<sup>43</sup> In order to give special expression to this desire, the verb ἐπιθυμέω ("to long for", "to desire"; cf. *P.Oxy.* 14.1666.11 [III CE]), ζητέω ("to seek after", "to desire"; cf. *P.Mich.* 3.203.17 [114–116 CE]) or the noun εὐχή ("wish"; cf. *P.Mich.* 8.494.6 [II CE]) are often used.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. L. RADERMACHER, *Neutestamentliche Grammatik* (HNT I/1), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1912, 128. C.F.D. MOULE, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959, 9 names such a case "Desiderative Imperfect"; see also F. MUSSNER, *Der Galaterbrief*, 3rd ed. (HThKNT), Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder 1977, 313, n. 110.

<sup>45</sup> In *P.Oxy.* 14.1761 (II–III CE), a letter expressing the longing after the departure of a dear person, we find the same verb as in Gal 4:20: "wishing to see you" (l. 8: θέλοντές σε εἶδῖν).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. H.D. BETZ, *Galatians. A Commentary on Paul's letter to the Churches of Galatia* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press 1979, 236; BAUER, *Paulus*, 237; GERBER, *Paulus*, 72.

his desire to come to see them in a similar manner (Rom 1:11: ἐπιποθῶ; 15:23: ἐπιποθίαν).

This specific longing terminology is obvious on many occasions. Nevertheless, in other places, the intention, hope, or desire to visit the addressees is simply mentioned, without emphasizing the emotional undertones, and without the concrete announcement of a trip with a fixed date (cf. already above 1 Cor 16:7; 2 Cor 12:20, but also 1 Thess 2:18; 2 Cor 1:15; Rom 1:13; 15:24, 32). The expressed but unfulfilled wish to come in Gal 4:20 implies a visit that may have been impossible at the moment Paul wrote the letter. We can only speculate about the exact circumstances, or whether a concrete reason explains why nothing is said here about a visit to the Galatians.<sup>47</sup> It would be bold to draw any conclusions from the absence of a concrete visit plan, e.g. in relation to the place where the letter has been written.

Although the boundaries to the above category are fluid, Paul's visit talks sometimes come closer to a concrete announcement, especially when specific dates are given or concrete details about preparations for the visit and further plans are added. Paul announces his imminent arrival to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 4:19 (ταχέως), 21; 11:34 (see also Phil 2:24; cf. 1:25). The same visit, accompanied by practical instructions for the collection, is mentioned again in 1 Cor 16:2–3. Further details about the length of his stay in Corinth, the journey through Macedonia, and the plans to spend the winter sketch these travel plans in even greater detail (1 Cor 16:5–8). The earlier plans to return to Corinth failed, resulting in a justification on Paul's part (cf. 2 Cor 1:15–17). After a quick and painful stay (cf. 2 Cor 2:1; 12:14; 13:1), Paul is now making new travel plans to Corinth, as can be seen from the promise not to be a burden to anyone and a formula of commitment (cf. 2 Cor 12:14; 13:1).<sup>48</sup> In Phlm 22, if this expression is not a rhetorical device to increase pressure on Philemon, the visit appears so imminent that the preparation of the guest room is already discussed. In Rom 15:28, the visit to Rome is announced immediately after the sending of the collection to Jerusalem and as a stopover on the journey to Spain.

<sup>47</sup> R.W. FUNK, "The letter: form and style", in: IDEM (ed.), *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God. The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology*, New York/Evanston, IL/London: Harper & Row Publishers 1966, 250–274, here 268; see also J.L. WHITE, "New Testament Epistolary Literature in the Framework of Ancient Epistolography", *ANRW* 25.2 (1984), 1730–1756, here 1747; F.J. MATERA, *Galatians* (SP 9), Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 1992, 162: "This may indicate that Paul is not in a position to visit the Galatians even though the crisis is acute"; see also BAUER, *Paulus*, 237 with reference to the „brieflytypische Sehensuchtmotiv“.

<sup>48</sup> The number of the Paul's stays in Corinth, and the sequence of the events are debated; the mainstream view assumes that Paul visited Corinth three times (cf. M. ÖHLER, *Geschichte des frühen Christentums*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2018, 237–239). BOSENIUS, *Abwesenheit*, 7–13 argues in favor of two visits, excluding a brief interim visit.

References to the role of higher powers – with a beneficial or an adverse effect on the travel plans – can be found in the Pauline epistles as well. Such a visit can only be realized with God’s help and assistance. Paul prays “night and day” to be able to see the Thessalonians again (1 Thess 3:10) and hopes that God will guide his path to them (3:11). Above all, God must allow (1 Cor 16:7: ἐὰν ὁ κύριος ἐπιτρέψη; cf. 4:19) him to carry out his travel plans, for such an undertaking depends solely on God’s will (Rom 1:10: ἐν τῷ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ; 15:32: διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ; cf. Phil 2:24).

Paul explicitly writes to the Thessalonians that he was repeatedly prevented by Satan (1 Thess 2:18: ἐνέκοθεν)<sup>49</sup> from coming to them. His visit to Corinth is also delayed, but it seems that this was due to positive circumstances and successful work in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8–9); even though the mention of “adversaries” could suggest a similar reason as in 1 Thess 2:18. We are informed that the long-planned journey to Rome was hindered (Rom 1:13: ἐκωλύθη; 15:22: ἐνεκοπήθη), without knowing a reason for this. The difficulties of traveling are linked to the precariousness and dangers of travel. The hindrance or delay of his coming are considered also elements of the so-called “apostolic *parousia*” pattern.<sup>50</sup> Using such notes, Paul also aligns himself with writers of private letters on papyrus who similarly excuse their non-arrival.

The letters are part of a complex communication process between Paul and his congregations, which was initiated by face-to-face encounters and maintained by occasional visits from Paul’s collaborators: “Paul needs to be seen not as a unique and solitary figure, but as part of a network of assistants, colleagues, and independent co-workers”.<sup>51</sup> His colleagues played a role in maintaining contact with his communities that should not be underestimated.

<sup>49</sup> The verb ἐγκόπτω fits this context very well, as it can also appear in magical contexts. The curse tablet from Carthage Audollent, *Defixiones* 234 (II–III CE) relates to chariot races and refers to the horses and drivers of the opposing chariots; the goal is to invoke supernatural entities to “bind their running, their feet, their victory, their onrush, their soul, their speed, hinder them, hobble them, dismember them” (ll. 41–44: κατάδη|σον αὐτοῖς δρόμον πόδας νείκην ὀρμὴν ψυχὴν ταχύτητα, ἐκκόψον ἐκνεύρωσον ἐξάρθρωσον αὐτούς), so that they cannot run and win in the hippodrome; the verb ἐγκόπτω occurs also in other curse tablets in stereotypical formulas in a similar context: cf. Audollent, *Defixiones* 236.21; 237.11, 33; 238.10, 28; 239.10, 24; and 240.10, 27–28.

<sup>50</sup> As elaborated by FUNK, “Apostolic Parousia”, 252; see also WHITE, *Form*, 99–111, and JOHNSON, “Paul’s Epistolary Presence”, 491; MULLINS, “Visit Talk”, 352–354, makes clear with some examples in the discussion of Funk’s approach. P. ARZT-GRABNER, “‘I Was Intending to Visit You, but ...’: Clauses Explaining Delayed Visits and Their Importance in Papyrus Letters and in Paul”, in: C.A. EVANS and H.D. ZACHARIAS (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon* (SSEJC 13; LSTS 70), London: T&T Clark 2009, 220–231, here 224–229, just compiles from documentary letters such passages without any reference to this debate.

<sup>51</sup> DONALDSON, “‘The Field God Has Assigned’”, 121; see also E.E. ELLIS, “Paul and His Co-Workers”, NTS 17 (1971), 437–452, here 439; M. ÖHLER, „Mitarbeiter und Mitarbeiterinnen des Paulus“, in: F.W. HORN (ed.), *Paulus Handbuch*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2013, 243–256, 255.

In order to deliver his letters to their addressees, Paul mainly employed people from his intimate circle and not, as was customary in ancient times, merchants or other travelers.<sup>52</sup> The couriers of his letters are vehicles of the apostle's messages in two senses: on the one hand, they make the letter writer present by reliably and safely delivering and presenting the letters to the congregations; on the other hand, they bring instructions and explanatory information in addition to the letters.<sup>53</sup> According to 2 Cor 7:6–8, Titus had brought a letter to Corinth which, although distressing for the recipients, had achieved the intended effect. Through his mediating presence, Titus was able to resolve interpersonal tensions and contribute to reconciliation between Paul and the Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor 7:13–15). Phoebe, the servant of the community in Cenchreae, whom Paul recommends to the Romans (Rom 16:1), is possibly also the bearer of the letter. Paul sends Onesimus back (Phlm 12) with the letter, with which Paul wants to rehabilitate him in the eyes of his master.

An overview of the modalities and channels of Paul's communication with his congregations reveals a complex network of relationships, with the letters serving as concentrated and systematic personal messages, acting as decisive factors in regulating tense situations. Even though Paul highly values direct communication, he acknowledges that letters have a particular effect. Using a few examples, the next paragraph explores the question about how Paul, going sometimes beyond the epistolary conventions, pragmatically reframes them in order to achieve his goals.

#### 4. Letters in action and interaction

This section highlights some of the advantages of letters. It shows how ancient people and Paul made deliberate use of this medium not just for communication, but also in order to change behavior. All the hopes of the letter writer to influence the situation and the minds of the addressee in his favor rest on a letter. Nevertheless, this not necessarily means a disadvantage. Letters appear in

<sup>52</sup> Cf. M. SCHUOL, „Paulus, seine Reisen und seine Briefe im Licht des römischen Transport- und Nachrichtenwesens“, in: U. MELL and M. TILLY (ed.), *Der 1. Thessalonicherbrief und die frühe Völkermission des Paulus* (WUNT 479), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2022, 145–154, 151–152. S.R. LLEWELYN, „Sending Letters in the Ancient World: Paul and the Philippians“, *TynB* 46 (1995), 337–356, 348 takes into consideration travelers as bearers of some of Paul's letters; see also S.R. LLEWELYN, „Letters in the Early Church“, *New Docs.* 7 (1994), 48–57, here 51–54. On possibilities for the conveyance of letters in antiquity, cf. A. KOLB, *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im Römischen Reich* (Klio 2), Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2000, 20–27; H.-J. KLAUCK, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament. A Guide of Context and Exegesis*, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press 2006, 60–66; S.R. LLEWELYN, „Sending Letters“, 339–349.

<sup>53</sup> See ÖHLER, „Mitarbeiter und Mitarbeiterinnen des Paulus“, 253–256; M. PAYNTER, *Das Evangelium bei Paulus als Kommunikationskonzeption* (NET 24), Tübingen: Narr Francke 2017, 397.

ancient practice as an effective agent of influence, despite the distance and absence involved.

#### 4.1. *Acting by letters in documentary papyri*

Letters enable a person to be “present” in another way.<sup>54</sup> They not only inform but also transmit something of the living personality of the sender. We see this in the letter of a certain Petesouchos to a number of relatives and friends listed by name in *P.Lips.* 1.104 (30 Jun 95 or 22 Jun 62 BCE); in an expression of thanks to a single person we read in ll. 14–17 with *BL* 1:214: χάριν σοι ἔχω | ἐφ’ αἷς γράφεις ἐπι[σ]τολαῖς. | ὅταν ἡμῖν γ[ρ]άψης, | ἔνψυχόν τι λαμβάνω (“I thank you for what you write in the letters. When you write to us, I receive something vivid”).<sup>55</sup> The same applies to the request of a certain Achillion to his “brother” Hierakapollon to write to him in any case, because by doing this, as we read in *P.Oxy.* 42.3067 (III CE): “we shall have the impression, through our letters, of seeing one another” (ll. 12–13: δόξομεν γὰρ διὰ | [τῶν γ]ραμμάτων ἀλλήλους ὁρᾶν).<sup>56</sup>

Letters can influence the emotional state of the recipients. When someone did not manage to come in person, letters are perceived by the addressees as a comfort, a relief and a reason for joy, as the next two examples show: in ll. 3–5 of *P.Mert.* 1.12 (26 Apr 59 CE) we read: κομισάμενός σου ἐπι[στολ(ήν)] | οὕτως περιχαρῆς ἐγενόμην [ὡς εἰ] | ὄντως ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐγεγόνειν (“when I received your letter, I was so exceedingly delighted, as if I were really in my native place”), or in ll. 21–26 of *P.Mich.* 8.482 (23 Aug 133 CE): μὴ ὀκ[νῆ]σης γράφων ἐπιστολάς, ἐπὶ [read ἐπεὶ] ἐχάρην λίαν λίαν | ὡς σου παραγεναμενος [read παραγεναμένου]. ἀφ’ ἧς | ἔπεμψές [read ἔπεμψάς] μοι τὴν ἐπιστολήν | σέσωμαι (“do not hesitate to write me letters, since I was joyful, as if you had come; from the day you sent me the letter I have been saved”). The letter senders are obviously aware of the effect of their written words and are able to assess their consequences. An impressive example of the reaction of letters on addressees can be found in the words of a certain Serenus, who writes in *P.Oxy.* 3.528 (II CE) in reference to the letter he

<sup>54</sup> See on this esp. KOSKENNIEMI, *Studien*, 40, 177–180; cf. also THRAEDE, *Grundzüge*, 149–150, 157–158; some considerations and examples can be found also in C. KREUZSALER, „... denn durch unsere Briefe wird es sein, als würden wir einander sehen’: Briefe als Kommunikationsmittel im römischen Ägypten“, in: C. KREUZSALER, B. PALME and A. ZDIARSKY (ed.), *Stimmen aus dem Wüstensand: Briefkultur im griechisch-römischen Ägypten* (Nilus 17), Wien: Phoibos 2010, 17–25, here 17–19.

<sup>55</sup> According to the interpretation of KOSKENNIEMI, *Studien*, 1956, 118–119, the expression ἔνψυχός is to be understood in the sense of a transfer of the personality of the sender through the letter; that is why the following translation is suggested: „Wenn du uns schreibst, erhalte ich etwas, worin deine Seele verborgen ist“; see on this papyrus also SCHOLL and HOMANN, „Antike Briefkultur“, 110–112.

<sup>56</sup> See also *P.Oxy.* 6.963 with *BL* 11:146 (II–III CE); *BGU* 4.1080.6–8 (III? CE); *P.Warr.* 20.5–10 with *BL* 4:103 (end III–beginning IV CE).

received: “you sent me letters which could have shaken a stone, so much did your words move me” (ll. 11–14: ἔπεμ|σάς [read ἔπεμ|ψάς] μν [read μοι] ἐπιστολάς δυναμενου [read δυναμένηας] λίθον | σαλεῖσσε [read σαλεῦσαι], οὕτως ὁ λόγῳ [read οἱ λόγοι] σου καικίνη|κάν [read κεκίνη|κάν] με).

The private letter of a certain Marcus, *P.Oxy.* 7.1062 (II CE) deserves some attention because of the expressed intention to bring about a change in the addressee’s behavior. From the context, we learn that a certain Matreas offered to buy some fleeces for Marcus. Since Marcus had not received the goods, there was an exchange of letters between them. In ll. 11–14, Marcus states that with this letter he hopes to hold Matreas accountable: ἀψ[τ]ήν | δέ σοι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν πέμψω διὰ Σύρου | ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀναγνοῖς νήφων καὶ σαυτοῦ | καταγνοῖς (“this letter, however, I will send to you through Syros, so that you may read it carefully and condemn yourself”). The letter is intended to shake Matreas’s conscience so much that he realizes his mistake and corrects his failure.

The same seems to be the intention of a certain Ioanne in *P.Bad.* 2.35 (16 Dec 87 CE), a reproachful letter to her business partner Epagathos.<sup>57</sup> The addressee had apparently carried out a financial transaction in her name but made a change that was not agreed upon. Ioanne’s reaction is correspondingly harsh; in l. 2, right after the opening greeting, we read: οὐ κ[αλ]ῶς ἐποί<η>σας (“you have not done well”); and further on in ll. 6–7: θαυμάζω (read θαυμάζω), πῶς τὴν πίστιν | σου ἤλλαξαι (“I wonder why you have changed your faithfulness”). In a comparable way, the reliability of the business partner Isas is discussed in *SB* 14.12172 (3 Sept 7 CE). The letter is written by a certain Ptollas, who reminds his addressee that he still owes him money. In a next step, he lets his addressee know in ll. 20–23: εἰδῶς | τὴν σὴν πίστιν | οὐδενὶ ἔδωκα | τὸ γράμμα (“because I know your faithfulness, I did not give the note to anyone”). This seemingly harmless note contains an indirect threat; ‘giving the note to anyone’ means that there is a possibility that debt collectors will be commissioned. The letter seems to be a last attempt to settle the matter before much more serious measures are taken.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4.2. Acting by letters in Paul

Paul makes conscious use of letters to guide the thoughts, actions, and behavior of his addressees; he intervenes to punish abuses in the communities or to correct developments that he considers wrong. A few examples will illustrate how he understands the creative use of epistolary formulas or motifs as a means to reach his communication goals.

<sup>57</sup> For a list of reproaches to the addressees in documentary letters, cf. WHITE, *Form*, 40–41.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. on this situation H.C. YOUTIE, “P. Mich. Inv. 1429: Polite but Firm”, *ZPE* 28 (1978), 262–264.

A clear case for this pragmatic orientation is the Letter to the Galatians. Apparently, foreign missionaries persuaded members of the congregation to undergo circumcision, which was contrary to the fundamental principles of Paul's preaching and beliefs. It is not known how Paul heard about these circumstances. The purpose of the letter is to convince the Galatians to refrain from such practices and return to the initial preaching. As a result, the letter to the Galatians has a very argumentative structure and, in places, a harsh tone. This intention is exemplified here by a typical expression in documentary letters. Right after greeting, Paul continues with a θαυμάζω-clause, similar to what we just saw in ll. 6–7 of *P.Bad.* 2.35. The letter sender is not simply surprised or astonished, but obviously personally annoyed. The formula reveals more than emotional involvement; its goal is to blame and rebuke the addressees.<sup>59</sup> This aspect is expressed in particular in letters with complaints about negligence or unfulfilled duties.<sup>60</sup> The aim of the rebuke, however, is not to interrupt the relationship with the addressee or to cause it to deteriorate; the rebuke plays a pragmatic role, serving as a verbal push of the addressee to fix the problem.<sup>61</sup> Paul's ultimate goal is to win them back and eliminate the influence of the opposing party.

With regard to the παρών/ἄπών motif, as outlined above, Paul sometimes makes assertions that go beyond what we know from private letters on papyrus. While in 1 Cor 4:21, the reference to a visit is coupled with a subtle threat, the whole concept is turned upside down in 2 Cor 1:23. For while in the documentary letters the visit appears as a strong desire when the opportunity arises, Paul lets the Corinthians know that he will *deliberately* not come to Corinth in order to spare them an even harsher rebuke in person.<sup>62</sup> In 2 Cor 2:1–3, the function of the letter is defined differently. The letter is intended to bring about first a change in behavior so that the postponed visit will no longer take place "in sadness". The letter/visit relationship takes on a different significance in 2 Cor 10:1–2, 9–10

<sup>59</sup> T.Y. MULLINS, "Formulas", 385: "The reproach aspect of the phrase has to be included in any attempt to identify it as a form"; D. KREMENDAHL, *Die Botschaft der Form. Zum Verhältnis von antiker Epistolographie und Rhetorik im Galaterbrief*, Freiburg: Universitätsverlag 2000, 103: „Scheinbar höflich und indirekt tadelt sie [i.e., die Formel] den Adressaten für ein Versäumnis oder einen Fehler“.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *P.Zen.Pestm.* 56.r.3–4 (25 Oct 251 BCE); *P.Bad.* 2.35.6–7 (16 Dec 87 CE); *P.Mil.* 2.75.4–5 with *BL* 6:77 (II CE); *P.Herm.* 11.2–6 (IV CE).

<sup>61</sup> See WHITE, *Light*, 210: "[W]hen astonishment is expressed because of some negligence in business, the sender anticipates a request or order that the problem be rectified".

<sup>62</sup> See also F. VOUGA, „Der Brief als Form der apostolischen Autorität“, in: K. BERGER et al. (ed.), *Studien und Texte zur Formgeschichte* (TANZ 7), Tübingen/Basel: Francke Verlag 1992, 7–58, here 36: „Paulus dreht den Topos um“; as BOSENIUS, *Abwesenheit*, puts it: „Nicht um durch 'briefliche Anwesenheit' einen Ersatz für die leibliche Abwesenheit zu schaffen, schreibt Paulus den 2Kor, sondern um in Abwesenheit die Dinge klären zu können“ (117), and „die Vorstellung der ‚brieflichen Gegenwart‘ (...) umfunktioniert, um die Autorität seiner brieflichen Anweisungen zu verstärken“ (115).

against the backdrop of accusations by some members about Paul's performance during his previous visit.<sup>63</sup> The letters occupy a special position in Paul's communication strategy and convey the apostle's powerful words against the worrying circumstances in the communities. By contrast, his personal presence appears to some weak and contemptible. The apostle makes it clear to the addressees with a threatening undertone in v. 11 that he is capable of acting differently when he is present again (cf. 2 Cor 13:2).<sup>64</sup>

In these examples, we encounter an important letter motif that runs counter to the practice in documentary letters of that time. We can assume that Paul was familiar with these conventions, but used them in his own pragmatic manner. This difference, even contrast, could not have escaped his addressees. And it is precisely through this modified form of a familiar *topos* that he exercises his apostolic authority and threatens his addressees with severe reactions on his forthcoming visit.

### 5. Some final remarks on the importance of letters in Paul's communication strategy

By their very nature, letters partially help the author and the addressees cope with physical separation. The desire for physical presence and immediate communication appears regularly in the documentary letters without thereby diminishing the importance of letters as a means of communication. This attitude expresses a great confidence in the capacity of a letter to transmit the message effectively and produce the desired effects. Being physically present and communicating through letters are both parts of a relational dynamic.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Cf. R. BIERINGER, « Présence dans l'absence du corps. Constructions de la présence et de l'absence de Paul en 2 Corinthiens dans la perspective des épîtres pauliniennes et du monde grec », in: C. BREYTENBACH (ed.), *Paul's Graeco-Roman Context* (BETHL 277), Leuven et al.: Peeters 2015, 357–371, here 364: « Paul utilise-t-il les images de la présence et de l'absence dans des contextes polémiques, en réponse aux reproches d'adversaires »; his communication strategy aims for efficiency, cf. VOUGA, „Brief“, 34.


<sup>64</sup> An example that might be closer to the meaning of these Pauline threats, also coupled with the same epistolary motif, might be the official letter *P.Tebt.* 1.37 (9 Dec 73–7 Jan 72 BCE). The addressee, a certain Petesouchos, is first instructed to carry out certain administrative tasks until the sender arrives in person: “therefore, as I am occupied with urgent business, I have written to you so that you may undertake the matter” (ll. 15–19: ἐγὼ οὖν περισπόμενος περὶ ἀναγκαίων γέγραφα σοι ἵνα ἰκανὸς γένηι); however, should it happen that the addressee neglects this task, then, as we read in ll. 24–25: ἀναγκασθήσομαι | ἐγὼ ἐλθεῖν αὐριο[v.] (“I will be forced to come myself tomorrow”); cf. the translation by B.P. GRENFELL and A.S. HUNT in *P.Tebt.* 1, p. 134. However, because “the exact meaning of this letter is unclear” (WHITE, *Light*, 98), it is uncertain whether the letter writer's own arrival includes an implicit threat or not.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. GERBER, *Paulus*, 71–72.

Paul writes to his addressees not merely because he misses them and wants to be with them, or because he wants to inform them about various matters. His letters are often action-oriented both in their theological expositions and practical sections, containing context-appropriate arguments, guidelines for action, requests, recommendations, commands, and promises. Paul often uses letters as a medium to influence his addressees in the hope of changing their attitudes and behavior. Even if he values the advantages of direct communication, this does not mean an implicit devaluation of the possibilities of a letter – in specific situations, letters even seem to be the better option. They make the apostle present and effective in a different way.<sup>66</sup>

In the announcements of future visits are intermingled some typical themes and motifs of ancient letters. Paul is familiar with the epistolary tradition and can consciously make use of it in a pragmatic and personal way. Since the addressees were also familiar with epistolary conventions, the deliberate deviations from known patterns are significant. This play with epistolary themes, motifs, and terms is used by Paul to exert power. The letters then become the arena for the apostle’s confrontation with misconduct in communities and in some situations might be even more effective than the presence of the apostle himself.

Contrary to Funk’s view that letters are a poor substitute for physical presence, it should not be assumed that Paul devalues written communication.<sup>67</sup> The visit announcements prepare for a personal reunion and, as soon as the correspondents separate again, the letters serve as an effective means to overcome the physical distance. The letters do not appear to be a ‘deficient’ means of communication or a kind of ‘emergency’ solution; instead, they play a crucial role in Paul’s overall missionary strategy.

Romeo POPA   
Department of New Testament Studies  
University of Vienna  
Austria  
E-mail: romeo.popa@univie.ac.at

<sup>66</sup> BOSENIUS, *Abwesenheit*, 86–96 even argues in favor of letters as „Idealform der apostolischen Verkündigung“; see also GERBER, *Paulus*, 58 („eine grundlegend andere Performanz als die einer Rede“).

<sup>67</sup> See also BOSENIUS, *Abwesenheit*, 78; E.R. RICHARDS, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing. Secretaries, Composition and Collection*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2004, 16, and E. KOBEL, *Paulus als interkultureller Vermittler. Eine Studie zur kulturellen Positionierung des Apostels der Völker* (Studies in Cultural Context of the Bible 1), Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh 2019, 84–85: „Für Paulus könnte das schriftliche Medium ebenso eine willkommene Alternative zur direkten mündlichen Kommunikation darstellen“.

**Bibliography**

- ARZT-GRABNER, Peter, KRITZER, Ruth E. et al., *1. Korinther*, PKNT 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).
- ARZT-GRABNER, Peter, *Letters and Letter Writing, Papyri and the New Testament 2* (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2023).
- ARZT-GRABNER, Peter, “‘I Was Intending to Visit You, but...’: Clauses Explaining Delayed Visits and Their Importance in Papyrus Letters and in Paul”, in *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon*, SSEJC 13; LSTS 70, ed. by Craig A. EVANS and H. Daniel ZACHARIAS (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 220–231.
- AUNE, David E., *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, LEC (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1987).
- AUSTIN, John L., *How to Do Things with Words. The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).
- BAUER, Thomas Johann, *Paulus und die kaiserzeitliche Epistolographie. Kontextualisierung und Analyse der Briefe an Philemon und an die Galater*, WUNT 276 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).
- BETZ, Hans D., *Galatians. A Commentary on Paul’s letter to the Churches of Galatia*, Hermeneia, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1979).
- BICKMANN, Jutta, *Kommunikation gegen den Tod: Studien zur paulinischen Briefpragmatik am Beispiel des Ersten Thessalonicherbriefes*, FzB 86 (Würzburg: Echter, 1998).
- BIERINGER, Reimund, « Présence dans l’absence du corps. Constructions de la présence et de l’absence de Paul en 2 Corinthiens dans la perspective des épîtres pauliniennes et du monde grec », in *Paul’s Graeco-Roman Context*, BETHL 277, ed. by Cilliers BREYTENBACH (Leuven et al.: Peeters, 2015), 357–371.
- BOSENIUS, Bärbel, *Die Abwesenheit des Apostels als theologisches Programm. Der zweite Korintherbrief als Beispiel für die Brieflichkeit der paulinischen Theologie*, TANZ, 11 (Tübingen/Basel: Francke Verlag, 1994).
- BOTHA, Johan E., “Speech act theory for New Testament exegesis”, *HTS* 47 (1991) 294–303.
- BOTHA, Johan E., “The Potential of speech act theory for New Testament exegesis: Some basic concepts”, *HTS* 47 (1991) 277–293.
- CLARYSSE, Willy, “Emotions in Greek Private Papyrus Letters”, *Ancient History* 47 (2017) 63–86.
- DEISSMANN, Adolf, *Bible Studies. Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity*, authorized translation by Alexander GRIEVE (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, <sup>2</sup>1903).
- DEISSMANN, Adolf, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*. New and completely revised edition with eighty-five illustrations from the latest German edition, translated by L.R.M. STRACHAN, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927).

- DOERING, Lutz, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography*, WUNT 298 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).
- DONALDSON, Terence L., "'The Field God Has Assigned' Geography and Mission in Paul", in *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity*, SCJud 18, ed. by Leif E. VAAGE (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2006), 109–137.
- DOTY, William G., *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1973).
- ELLIS, E. Earle, "Paul and His Co-Workers", *NTS* 17 (1971) 437–452.
- FUNK, Robert W., "The Apostolic Parousia: Form and Significance", in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. by W.R. FARMER, C.F.D. MOULE and R.R. NIEBUHR (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 249–268.
- FUNK, Robert W., "The letter: form and style", in *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God. The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology*, ed. by R.W. FUNK (New York/Evanston, IL/London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966) 250–274.
- GERBER, Christine, *Paulus und seine „Kinder“. Studien zur Beziehungsmetaphorik der paulinischen Briefe*, BZNW 136 (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2005).
- HEATH, Jane M.F., "Absent Presence of Paul and Christ: *Enargeia* in 1 Thessalonians 1–3", *JSNT* 32 (2009) 3–38.
- JOHNSON, Lee A., "Paul's Epistolary Presence in Corinth: A New Look at Robert W. Funk's Apostolic 'Parousia'", *CBQ* 68 (2006) 481–501.
- KARLSSON, Gustav, „Formelhaftes in Paulusbriefen?“, *Eranos* 54 (1956) 138–141.
- KLAUCK, Hans-Josef, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament. A Guide of Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006).
- KOBEL, Esther, *Paulus als interkultureller Vermittler. Eine Studie zur kulturellen Positionierung des Apostels der Völker*, Studies in Cultural Context of the Bible 1 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2019).
- KOLB, Anne, *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im Römischen Reich*, *Klio* 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000).
- KOSKENNIEMI, Heikki, *Studien zur Idee und Phraseologie des griechischen Briefes bis 400 n.Chr.*, Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia B/102,2 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1956).
- KOTSIFOU, Chrysi, "Emotions and Papyri: Insights into the Theatre of Human Experience in Antiquity", in *Unveiling Emotions: Sources and Methods for the Study of Emotions in the Greek World*, Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien 52, ed. by Angelos CHANIOTIS (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2012), 39–90.
- KREINECKER, Christina M., "Emotions in Documentary Papyri: Joy and Sorrow in Everyday Life", in *Emotions from Ben-Sirah to Paul*, DCL.Y, ed. by R. EGGER-WENZEL and J. CORLEY (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012) 451–271.
- KREMENDAHL, Dieter, *Die Botschaft der Form. Zum Verhältnis von antiker Epistolographie und Rhetorik im Galaterbrief* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2000).

- KREUZSALER, Claudia, „‘...denn durch unsere Briefe wird es sein, als würden wir einander sehen’: Briefe als Kommunikationsmittel im römischen Ägypten“, in *Stimmen aus dem Wüstensand: Briefkultur im griechisch-römischen Ägypten*, Nilus 17, ed. by Claudia KREUZSALER, Bernhard PALME and Angelika ZDIARSKY (Wien: Phoibos, 2010), 17–25.
- LLEWELYN, Stephen Robert, “Letters in the Early Church”, *New Docs.* 7 (1994) 48–57.
- LLEWELYN, Stephen Robert, “Sending Letters in the Ancient World: Paul and the Philippians”, *TynB* 46 (1995) 337–356.
- MATERA, Frank J., *Galatians*, SP 9 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992).
- MITCHELL, Margaret M., “New Testament Envoys in the Context of Greco-Roman Diplomatic and Epistolary Conventions: The Example of Timothy and Titus”, *JBL* 111 (1992) 641–662.
- MOULE, Charles F.D., *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959).
- MOULTON, James H. and MILLIGAN, George, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929).
- MUIR, Steven, “Religion on the Road in Ancient Greece and Rome”, in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*, SCJud 21, ed. by Philip A. HARLAND (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 29–47.
- MULLINS, Terence Y., “Formulas in New Testament Epistles”, *JBL* 91 (1972) 380–390.
- MULLINS, Terence Y., “Visit Talk in New Testament Letters”, *CBQ* 35 (1973) 350–358.
- MUBNER, Franz, *Der Galaterbrief*, 3rd ed., HThKNT (Freiburg / Basel / Wien: Herder, 1977).
- MUTSCHLER, Bernhard, „Silvanus/Silas und Thimotheus als Mitarbeiter des Paulus. Eine Spurensuche in der Apostelgeschichte und im 1. Thessalonicherbrief“, in *Der 1. Thessalonicherbrief und die frühe Völkermission des Paulus*, WUNT 479, ed. by Ulrich MELL und Michael TILLY (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 180–227.
- NACHTERGAELE, Delphine, *The Formulaic Language of the Greek Private Papyrus Letters*, Trismegistos Online Publications. Special Series 6 (Leuven, 2023).
- ÖHLER, Markus, „Mitarbeiter und Mitarbeiterinnen des Paulus“, in *Paulus Handbuch*, ed. by Friedrich W. HORN (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 243–256.
- ÖHLER, Markus, *Geschichte des frühen Christentums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018).
- PAYNTER, Maximilian, *Das Evangelium bei Paulus als Kommunikationskonzeption*, Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie 24 (Tübingen: Narr Francke, 2017).
- PORTER, Stanley E., “A Functional Letter Perspective: Towards a Grammar of Epistolary Form”, in *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form*, Pauline Studies 6, ed. by S.E. PORTER and S.A. ADAMS (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010), 9–31.
- PORTER, Stanley E., *The Apostle Paul. His Life, Thought, and Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016).
- PREISIGKE, Friedrich, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden, mit Einschluß der griechischen Inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienbilder usw. aus Ägypten*, vol. 2: Λ–Ω (Berlin, 1927).

- RADERMACHER, Ludwig, *Neutestamentliche Grammatik*, HNT I/1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1912).
- RICHARDS, E. Randolph, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing. Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).
- ROLLER, Otto, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe. Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom antiken Briefe*, BWANT 58 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933).
- SCHELLENBERG, Ryan S., “‘Danger in the wilderness, danger at sea’: Paul and the Perils of Travel”, in *Travel and Religion in Antiquity*, SCJud 21, ed. by Philip A. HARLAND (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 141–161.
- SCHNIDER, Franz and STENGER, Werner, *Studien zum neutestamentlichen Briefformular*, NTTS 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1987).
- SCHOLL, Reinhold and HOMANN, Margit, „Antike Briefkultur unter Familienmitgliedern“, in *Papyrologie und Exegese. Die Auslegung des Neuen Testaments im Lichte der Papyri*, WUNT II/341, ed. by J. HERZER (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 47–126.
- SCHUOL, Monika, „Paulus, seine Reisen und seine Briefe im Licht des römischen Transport- und Nachrichtenwesens“, in *Der 1. Thessalonicherbrief und die frühe Völkermission des Paulus*, WUNT 479, ed. by Ulrich MELL and Michael TILLY (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 145–154.
- SIJPESTEIJN, Pieter J., “Three private letters”, *ZPE* 113 (1996) 163–167.
- STIREWALT, M. Luther, *Studies in Ancient Greek Epistolography*, RBS 27 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993).
- STOWERS, Stanley K., *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, LEC (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986).
- THRAEDE, Klaus, *Grundzüge griechisch-römischer Briefftopik*, Zetemata 48 (München: Becks 1970).
- THURÉN, Lauri, “Epistolography and Rhetoric. Case not Closed”, in *Paul and Ancient Rhetoric. Theory and Practice in the Hellenistic Context*, ed. by Stanley E. PORTER and Bryan R. DYER (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 141–159.
- TRAPP, Michael (ed.), *Greek and Latin Letters: An Anthology, with Translation*, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- VOUGA, François, „Der Brief als Form der apostolischen Autorität“, in *Studien und Texte zur Formgeschichte*, TANZ 7, ed. by Klaus BERGER et al. (Tübingen/Basel: Francke Verlag, 1992), 7–58.
- WHITE, John L., “New Testament Epistolary Literature in the Framework of Ancient Epistolography”, *ANRW* 25.2 (1984) 1730–1756.
- WHITE, John L., “Saint Paul and the Apostolic Letter Tradition”, *CBQ* 45 (1983) 433–444.
- WHITE, John L., *Light from Ancient Letters* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986).
- WHITE, John L., *The Form and Function of the Body of the Greek Letter: A Study of the Letter-Body in the Non-Literary Papyri and in Paul the Apostle*, SBLDS 2 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972).
- WHITE, L. Michael and FITZGERALD, John T., “Quod Est Comparandum: The Problem of Parallels”, in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture. Comparative Studies in*

ROMEO POPA

*Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. John T. FITZGERALD, Thomas H. OLBRICHT and L. Michael WHITE (Leiden/Boston 2003), 13–39.

YOUTIE, Herbert C., “P. Mich. Inv. 1429: Polite but Firm”, *ZPE* 28 (1978) 262–264.

ZWIEP, Arie W., “Bible Hermeneutics from 1950 to the Present: Trends and Developments”, in *Handbuch der Bibelhermeneutiken, Von Origenes bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Oda WISCHMEYER (Boston/Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 933–1008.

Der Beitrag entstand im Rahmen eines Forschungsprojekts des Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (funded by the Austrian Science Fund).